

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

**Rob McKenna**  
Metropolitan  
King County  
Council  
District Six  
(206) 296-1006



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## King County needs effective handling of I-695

How do local families and businesses decide what to include in their budgets? By setting priorities, of course. They fund the most important things first. Government should respond to Initiative 695's cut in car tab revenues with the same kind of common sense.

That's what I wrote in a *Seattle Times* guest editorial on December 13. A copy is included with this newsletter. I hope you will read it and share with me any thoughts you have on the importance of prioritization in making budget decisions. As the incoming chairman of the County Council's Budget and Fiscal Management Committee, your input will be important to me.

King County is the largest local government in the state of Washington. We had an opportunity to set an example for every other county and city in the state with our year 2000 budget. Unfortunately, we missed that opportunity.

The county executive and a majority of the county council consciously decided to fund several programs in our Public Health department and Sheriff's Office – including the only law enforcement helicopter in King County – for just the first six months of 2000. They believe that this strategy of partially funding essential programs will improve our chances of lobbying the state legislature for additional funding.

Our police officers and public health clinic patients should never be used as human shields for our Olympia lobbyists. We could have fully funded public safety for the entire year if we had budgeted with the proper sense of priorities.

Ours is a large county and county government has the ability to re-prioritize spending to keep serving those who depend the most on our public safety and health programs. Instead, we chose the worst possible outcome: to increase property taxes by three times the rate of inflation while reducing vital services.

During our budget debate, I presented a long list of possible efficiencies and cuts to non-essential services (they are detailed in my guest editorial) that could have been used to fully fund the Sheriff's Office and our public health clinics. After most of these efficiencies and cuts were rejected, I voted "no" on the \$2.4 billion budget that ultimately passed.

King County should have used the same kind of common sense in budgeting for the year 2000 that families and businesses use in everyday life. If we had, the Sheriff's Office and public health clinics would be fully funded today and the impact of I-695 on county services would have been minimized.

I will do everything I can to bring a true sense of priorities to King County's budget for 2001. I would appreciate hearing any comments you have about what approach the county should take to the passage of I-695, or about my *Seattle Times* editorial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Rob McKenna".

Rob McKenna

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## Mercer Island Youth and Family Services Among Recipients of Grant Funds

Several key Mercer Island agencies and projects will receive grants that I proposed for inclusion in the county's year 2000 budget. **Mercer Island Youth and Family Services** will receive \$2,500 to help fund their excellent schedule of programs for senior citizens. The **Mercer Island Boys and Girls Club** has also been allocated \$2,500.

**Youth Theatre Northwest** will receive \$3,000 to provide more opportunities for local youth to learn theatre arts and enhance skills such as confidence, presentation, and poise that will help them with their future endeavors. As a regional government, King County's contributions to Mercer Island's growing community needs are not only vitally important but a key responsibility.

County funding will also be provided in our year 2000 budget for the **Boy Scouts of America**, the **King County Domestic Violence Coalition**, **Youth Care – Friends Of Street Kids** and the **Pacific Science Center** to benefit children and families throughout the entire Eastside. ■

## Stroum Center Receives Surplus Van

As part of our 1999 budget, the King County Council distributed 26 surplus Metro vans to social service organizations across the county. I nominated the Stroum Community Center for a van based on the incredible range of services that they provide to youth, families and seniors not only on

Mercer Island, but across the entire Eastside.

By donating surplus vans to organizations such as the Stroum



Center, King County can actually save money that would otherwise be spent on providing expensive paratransit service to the same clients. On December 2nd I had the opportunity to visit the Stroum Center, meet with Executive Director Gary Pollock, other staff members, and officially hand over the keys to the van. *For additional information about the Stroum Community Center, please contact Gary Pollock at: (206) 232-7115.* ■

# I-90 Center Lane Update

By now, most of you are aware of the three Sound Transit Regional Express projects currently being planned for Mercer Island: the expanded transit center, additional park and ride capacity and the I-90 center lane project. As a member of the Sound Transit board, I have been following these issues closely and thought you might appreciate a status report.

At its November meeting, Sound Transit's Mercer Island Steering Committee selected preferred alternatives for the transit center and the park and ride lot. Based on input from Mercer Island representatives, the committee endorsed an expanded transit center to be built north of I-90, on the site of the existing park and ride lot. A new structured parking garage for park and ride users, partially underground, has been recommended for construction south of I-90, along the old Sunset Highway. The committee also agreed to consider enhanced pedestrian connections between the two new facilities.

In February the committee is likely to select a preferred alternative for the I-90 center-lane project. In order for this to happen, the committee

must decide whether or not the center lanes should be converted to 24 hour, two-way operations – as opposed to the present one-way, peak-direction configuration. In addition, should two-way operations be endorsed, the committee must decide whether or not to allow HOV's and Mercer Island single occupancy vehicles (SOV's) continued access to the center lanes.



I have consistently supported alternative R-5, which would convert shoulder lanes in the off-peak directions to transit use, and allow continued access for HOV's and Mercer Island SOV's to the peak-direction center lanes. However, it does not seem likely that this alternative will be selected by the steering committee, primarily because of safety and operational concerns. The question which remains unanswered is this: Will the benefits of 24 hour, two-way transit operations offset the inconvenience to HOV and Mercer Island SOV travelers who would eventually be displaced from the center lanes?

As your representative on the King County Council and the Sound Transit board, I can only support a solution that will maximize benefits for all users of the I-90 corridor, and protect the transportation options and mobility of Mercer Island residents. ■

# Town Hall

Meet with King County Councilmember Rob McKenna

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Please join us:

**February 12:**

10- 11:30 a.m. Bellevue City Hall - Council Chambers  
11511 Main St., Bellevue

**Also speaking:**

**Senator Dan McDonald**

**Mayor Chuck Mosher**, Bellevue

1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Renton Community Center  
1715 Maple Valley Highway, Renton

**Also speaking:**

**Councilmember Randy Corman,**

Renton City Council President

**February 17:**

7 - 8:30p.m. Stroum Jewish Community Center -  
Pollock Lounge

3801 E. Mercer Way, Mercer Island

**Also speaking:**

**Mayor Alan Merkle**, Mercer Island



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**Important community update**

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